

REMARKS

In the Office Action¹ mailed October 6, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Matsumoto et al. (Japanese Patent No. 08-262371, hereafter "Matsumoto"), and objected to claims 18-20 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but stated that claims 18-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

By this Amendment, Applicants cancel claims 1 and 21, and rewrite claims 18 and 19 in independent form. Accordingly, claims 18-20 remain pending.

Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 18-20. Applicants disagree with the Examiner's rejection of claims 1 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Matsumoto. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicants cancel claims 1 and 21, and amend claims 18 and 19 to include all the elements of canceled claim 1. Accordingly, independent claims 18 and 19, and claim 20 dependent from claim 19, are in condition for allowance.

Applicants submit that claims 1 and 21 are canceled without acquiescing to the Examiner's ground of rejection and without prejudice to continue prosecution of these claims in a continuation application. Applicants cancel claims 1 and 21 solely to allow issuance of the remaining claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

¹ The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.


Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge
any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: March 5, 2007

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